

Like I said, she just got there. Another thing I said to my Chief of Staff, I said, “you know, if Sheila had been in Congress for 20 years, It would take me 3 hours to introduce her.” [Laughter] She will have done so much by then, we’ll just have to forego the introduction. [Laughter] This is very important. We need people like this.

You know, I read—as a lot of you know, I read a lot of American history, and I spent a lot of time—when I was asked by one of the major magazines to write an essay on the person I thought should be considered the person of the century. And Time magazine selected Mr. Einstein, which I think is a good selection. They could have selected Gandhi; that would have been a good selection. They could have selected Franklin Roosevelt or Winston Churchill. I argued for Roosevelt. I spent a lot of time. I went back, and I re-read a lot of the things I’d read about Roosevelt.

I’ll tell you an interesting story. Shortly after Roosevelt contracted polio—keep in mind, he was almost 40 years old when he got it. He had run for Vice President of the United States at the tender age of 38. He was a dashing, handsome, thin man; he cut a great figure on the campaign trail in 1920. And he seemed to have the world at his finger tips. And there he was, just a couple of years later, hobbled by polio.

And he nourished the dream for many years that he would, in fact, walk again. And he also knew that, whatever happened, he had to keep fighting. So at length, he decided he would take an office in New York, in a highrise, and he would actually try to go to work there. But because he wanted to leave open the possibility of walking again, he would not be seen in his wheelchair.

So he had these big braces, and at the time they were heavy and awkward and impossible to navigate. And he walked into this New York highrise the first day, and he got up, and he fell flat on his face. And there was no one there to pick him up. And everyone was staring at him. Now keep in mind, just a year or so he had run for Vice President. And even though the Democrats had lost, no one thought it was his fault. And he was alone, lying on his face in New York. And he pushed himself up off the floor and threw

his head back and laughed and smiled and drug himself across the floor to the wall, straightened his braces out, and pulled himself up.

What is the lesson in that. Life is 50 percent what happens to you, and 50 percent in how you respond to what happens to you. You can lose a lot of options in life, but as long as you’re breathing and thinking, you’ve still got some left—a large number. The thing is to make the most of the moment, with heart.

I think that your Member of Congress has done that. I admire her, and I’m honored to be here for her tonight.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:50 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to reception hosts Jenard and Gail Gross; Mrs. Gross’ mother, Ida Fink; Mayor Lee P. Brown of Houston; former Secretary of the Treasury Lloyd Bentsen and his wife, B.A.; Billie Carr, chair, Texas Democratic Committee; gospel singer Kathy Taylor-Brown; actress Goldie Hawn; Reform Party founder H. Ross Perot; actor Chevy Chase; and Representative Jackson Lee’s husband, Elwin C. Lee, and son, Jason C.B. Lee.

## Remarks to the Texas Legislative Victory Fund in Houston

January 11, 2000

You know, when Debbie got into that, how we were probably related to each other—[laughter]—I did not know where she was going with it. I thought she was going to do some hillbilly shtick about how our eyes were too close set—[laughter]—or I could offer to play you that banjo song from “Deliverance.” I didn’t know what was going on there for a while. [Laughter] And after I became President, I found that I had all these relatives I didn’t know existed. [Laughter] They just kept cropping up all over. And most of them had more limited resources than I did.

I’ll tell you one real quick story. I did get one letter from a woman way up in her eighties in northeast Louisiana who showed me how John Grisham and I were like tenth cousins. And I wrote him a letter and said, “Praise God, you’re the first one that has any money”—[laughter]—“come to the White House tomorrow.” [Laughter] And it was

really funny. It turned out it was true. She wrote him identical letters. We checked our lineage, and we turned out to be kin. And one of us is still claiming it. *[Laughter]*

I want to thank John Eddie and Sheridan for having us here in their home, their modest little home. *[Laughter]* It makes the White House look like public housing. *[Laughter]* I also want to thank them, if you'll indulge me, for having Hillary here just a few weeks ago. She had a wonderful time and was jealous that I was going back today.

I want to thank Debbie and Frank for being such wonderful friends to us. And for all of you being here tonight. You know, my interest in this legislative endeavor obviously relates, in part, to reapportionment. I have worked as hard as I could—and we've had some terrific fights in Washington—to preserve the integrity of the census. I just want everybody counted who's entitled to be counted, and in the most effective and complete and honest way.

I also very much hope that members of my party will win the House of Representatives, and they have actually an outside chance to at least split the United States Senate this year, if we can pick up two or three more candidates we maybe could do better.

But then the census comes along, and it will be done in 2000, and the whole thing could be undone again. And so I think it's very important that—you know, when Debbie was saying what she was saying, I wanted to just stand up and say, there is a real meaning here. You could work your hearts out and have a great 2000, and then have it undone in 2002, and you wouldn't like that. So I do want to thank you for being here, and I want to urge you to redouble your efforts.

The only other thing I'd like to say is this. One other thing Debbie said made me think of a point I wanted to make. She said that I believe that you could have a country in which we protect the individual rights of our citizens, including their access to the courts, and still grow the economy. I do believe that. And when I was pondering whether I should run for President—it seems like a hundred years ago now, way back in 1991—one of the things that just drove me crazy about the way Washington worked at the time—and I obvi-

ously felt that the other party was more responsible, but I didn't think our crowd was blameless either, because when you get into a—you know how it is, you get into any kind of relationship and you're just frozen, and then if you're not careful you just keep making the same mistakes over and over again. And we all have to work on that, in our families and our businesses and everything we do.

But the thing that really bothered me was that in order to sort of break through on the news or in the media or whatever, that it seemed to me that the people in Washington, beginning at the White House, kept posing false choices to the American people. You'd have to—are you going to be for business, or are you going to be for labor? Are you going to be for a strong economy, or are you going to be for all those trial lawyers having the right to bring suit? Are you going to be for a strong economy, or are you going to be for those chokingly burdensome environmental regulations? Are you going to be for American jobs or all that trade business?

And I could give you 30 examples. It made a nice debate. And once you decided which side you were on of the either/or questions, it relieved you of all responsibility to think, which gives you a lot of free time to do other things. But it's ultimately a very unsatisfying way to live. And it's one of the big reasons our country got in the ditch we were in, in 1992, because you just had to get on one side or the other and they were bogus choices, by and large.

There are real choices to be made, and they're hard enough in life. But you completely paralyze yourself if you spend all your time organizing your mind and your activities around false choices. And one of the things that we have tried to do in the last 7 years is to at last put real choices before the American people and to try to make the right ones. And I think the results have been pretty good.

Some of you commented that you saw the television coverage today of how I was fortunate enough to start this day. I woke up on the edge of the Grand Canyon and watched the Sun rise, not only over, but in, the Grand Canyon. It was an amazing experience. And I used authority established under President

Theodore Roosevelt to set up national monuments, to set aside another million acres of land around the Grand Canyon to protect it—a very important part of the watershed there for the Colorado River and a number of other places.

And I was looking at some of the things that Theodore Roosevelt said. I admired him very much, and he actually served as President at a time very much like the time in which I have served, when we not only changed centuries, but we changed the paradigm of the economy, from a rural economy to an industrial economy, just as in my time we've moved from an industrial economy to a global information-based economy, with all the attendant upheaval and changes.

But he said that if you were part of a growing young country, you had a special responsibility to take the long look ahead; that successful enterprises always took the long look ahead. And that's the last thing I'll leave you with.

In my lifetime, anyway, our country has never had this much economic prosperity, social progress—you know what the economic numbers are, but let me also tell you we had—the welfare rolls have been cut in half; they're the lowest they've been in 32 years; the unemployment rate among African-Americans and Hispanics is the lowest ever measured; the poverty rate among Hispanics is the lowest in 25 years, among African-Americans the lowest ever measured; among women, the unemployment rate is the lowest in 40 years; and keep in mind, 40 years ago there was a far smaller percentage of women seeking jobs in the work force. So the society is beginning to grow together. We have the lowest crime rate in over 25 years now.

So we've never had in my lifetime this kind of economic progress, social progress, national self-confidence, with the absence of a crisis at home or a threat from abroad. You just think about it, in your lifetime.

I've often—I'm glad to see, since I'm in Texas I want to say this, I've been telling this to folks at the White House—I'm glad to see a lot of people reassessing and revising upward their estimation of the performance of Lyndon Johnson as President, because of the work he did in civil rights and education and health care and against poverty.

But basically, his Presidency was weakened in its potential impact because he not only had to deal with—he had enormously successful economy in the beginning—but he had to deal with the civil rights issue at home and the Vietnam war abroad. And the competing demands eventually undermined the economy, instead of opening the economy more so he could move ahead on the social problems. So we never had this happen before, in my lifetime.

That's the last thing I'd like to tell you. Whatever you do in politics this year, this issue, the Presidential race, and everything in between, you just remember that. And I say that as a citizen, I'll be a citizen after this next election, for the first time in a long time. And what I want, what I tried to do is to turn this country around and to bring it together so that we would be in a position to paint the picture of the 21st century we want to. And I think we have turned it around and brought it together.

But very often, when things are going well, people get distracted or do what seems easiest and most at hand. And what we really ought to be doing is dealing with the aging of our society, make sure we've got Social Security and Medicare fixed before we double the number of people over 65. We've got all these kids out there who come from all different racial, ethnic, religious groups; they all need a world-class education if our retirement is going to be secure.

We've got all these people and places that haven't participated in this recovery. They need to be empowered to be part of the free enterprise system. If we don't do that now—if we can't prove now that we can do something about poverty in terms of community and individual empowerment, we will never get around to doing it, because we will never have these conditions any better.

We need to work with our friends around the world to build a truly interdependent world where we can lead but not dominate, where we can share responsibilities and be good neighbors and ask others to be good neighbors in return. We need to prove that just as we tried to get the Irish and the people in the Middle East and the people in the Balkans and the people in Africa to lay aside their racial and tribal and ethnic and

religious hatreds, that we can do that here at home. We need to think about the big things. And we don't need to get into false choices.

One of the reasons I went to the Grand Canyon today was to say that it is no longer necessary for a country to grow rich and to burn up the environment. You can now improve the environment and get even richer. That's a fundamental difference in the last 20 years. It was not true in the industrial age; it is no longer true. The Detroit auto show, right now, they've got cars getting 70 miles a gallon, demonstration cars. They'll be on the market in no time. And it's just the beginning.

So I think we're going into the most interesting, exciting time in human history. I'm proud that my country is in good shape. And I'm not running for anything. [Laughter] I came here today because you were good to me, both those of you who are having me here, John Eddie and Debbie and the others who brought me here, but also because this country has been good to me. And we're in good shape now. And I don't want to see us squander this opportunity. I don't know when we'll ever get it again. I just know it has never been here before in my lifetime.

So you think about that every day, between now and election day. Ask your friends and your neighbors, without regard to their party, not to make any bogus choices, not to divide people in artificial ways, and take the long look ahead. If we do that, I'm pretty confident how it will all come out.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:58 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to John Eddie and Sheridan Williams, dinner hosts; Debbie D. Branson, president, Texas Trial Lawyers Association, who introduced the President, and her husband, Frank; and author John Grisham.

## **Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting the Report on the Loan Guarantees to Israel Program**

*January 11, 2000*

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Pursuant to section 226(k) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended (FAA), and pursuant to section 1205 of the International Security and Development Cooperation Act of 1985 (ISDCA), enclosed is a copy of the 1999 Report to the Congress on the Loan Guarantees to Israel Program. As the report under section 226(k) of the FAA is required annually until December 31, 1999, this will be the final report submitted under section 226(k) of the FAA.

Sincerely,

**William J. Clinton**

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, Jesse Helms, chairman, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., ranking member, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations; Ted Stevens, chairman, and Robert C. Byrd, ranking member, Senate Committee on Appropriations; Benjamin A. Gilman, chairman, and Sam Gejdensen, ranking member, House Committee on International Relations; and C.W. Bill Young, chairman, and David R. Obey, ranking member, House Committee on Appropriations. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 12.

## **Remarks to the Democratic Leadership Council**

*January 12, 2000*

Thank you. Well, first of all, I think we ought to acknowledge that public speaking is not something Jessica does every day, and I think she did a terrific job. I thank her for coming here.

I want to thank Tommy and Sarah and Maggie and Aliza and Grandmother for coming also, so that you would have a human, real example of the subject I want to address today, and one of the biggest reasons I ran for President.